

Introduction to Judaism 2025
Union for Reform Judaism

Congregation Rodeph Shalom
 Tuesdays, January 14 – April 8
 6:00-8:00pm
 (215) 627-6747
 Sessions will only be held in-person
 following relevant Covid protocols

Rabbi Jill L. Maderer (JLM)
 Rabbi Eli C. Freedman (ECF)
 Cantor Brad Hyman (BDH)
 Rabbi Emeritus Bill Kuhn (BK)
 Michael Riccardi (MR)
 Lauren Newman (LN)

Books: [*Aleph Isn't Tough: An Introduction to Hebrew for Adults*](#) by Linda Motzkin, *Night* by Elie Weisel, *Essential Judaism ("EJ")* by George Robinson, for those considering conversion to Judaism: either *Choosing Judaism* by Lydia Kukoff or *Choosing a Jewish Life* by Anita Diamant, for further Hebrew study consider: www.easylearnhebrew.com. Please contact us if you have any difficulties acquiring your books.

Please:

- Bring your Hebrew Workbook to every session.
- Read assigned selections in preparation for each class.

Every Friday: 4:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m. Jewish Meditation, 6:00 p.m.-7:15 p.m. Shabbat Evening Service

Every Saturday: 9:15-10:30 a.m. Torah Study, 10:45 a.m - 12:15 p.m. Shabbat Morning Service

| | <u>Instructor</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | ECF | 1/14/25 | Introduction, Shabbat |
| 2 | BK | 1/21/25 | The Life Cycle: Birth, B'nai Mitzvah, Conversion, Wedding, Death, Mourning, Afterlife <i>EJ</i> : Chapter 3: "Birth to Death: A Jewish Life Cycle" Read: Beginning of chapter and Birth (140-144), Bar/Bat Mitzvah (159-160), Engagement/Marriage (161-168), Conversion (177-180), Death/Mourning (187-194), Afterlife (194-196) |
| 3 | JLM | 1/28/25 | Evolution of the Text <i>EJ</i> : Chapter 5: "In the Beginning: The Hebrew Bible" Read: Tanakh (263-266), What is in the Hebrew Bible? (266-269), Torah (269-270), Sidebars (271-273) <i>EJ</i> : Chapter 6: "The Rabbis said: The Talmud and Other Rabbinical Writings" Read: Roots of Rabbinic Judaism (316-318) |
| 4 | BDH | 2/4/25 | High Holy Days <i>EJ</i> : Chapter 2: "Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year" Read: High Holy Days (94-103) |

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| 5 | JLM | 2/11/25 | <p>The Jewish Calendar: Jewish Holidays, Part 1 <i>EJ</i>: Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year” Read: Sacred Time- the Jewish calendar (79-83), Sukkot (103-110), Shemini Atzeret (pgs 110-111), Simchat Torah (112-113), Hanukkah (114-117), Tu B’Shevat (117-119)</p> |
| | | Wed. 2/12/25 | Join us for a Tu BiShvat Concert |
| 6 | JLM | 2/18/25 | <p>Holidays, Part Two: Purim, Shavuot, Tisha B’av Passover and the Haggadah (reading assignment on next page) <i>EJ</i>: Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year” Read: Pesakh (120-127)</p> |
| 7 | BDH | 2/25/25 | <p>Prayer and Blessings <i>EJ</i>: Chapter 1: “Service of the Heart: Prayer and Ritual” Read: Jewish Idea of Prayer (9-10), Blessings of Daily Life (21-22), Synagogue (47-49)</p> |
| | | 2/28/25 | Attend 6:00pm Friday Shabbat service followed by a catered Shabbat dinner. Register by clicking here . Contact Steven Share or Michael Saks |
| 8 | BDH | 3/4/25 | <p>God Ideas <i>EJ</i>: Chapter 8: “The Philosophers: The Continuing Evolution of Jewish Thought” Read: Beginning of chapter (408-409), Rabbis versus Philosophers (409-10), also choose any 4 philosophers to read about</p> |
| 9 | ECF | 3/11/25 | <p>Holocaust (Yom HaShoah 4/24/2025) and Israel (Yom HaAtzmaut 5/1/2025) <i>EJ</i>: Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year” Read: Yom Ha’Shoah, Yom Ha’Atzmaut, Yom Ha’Zikaron, Yom Yerushalyim (130-132); <i>Night</i>, by Elie Wiesel <i>EJ</i>: Chapter 9: “Beyond the Rabbis: How Judaism Got Where it is Today” Read: Evolution of Anti-Semitism (492-494), Sifting Through the Ashes (494-497), Exiles Return (497-500)</p> |
| | | Thurs. 3/13/25 | PURIM! Attend the RS Community Purim Party |
| 10 | BK | 3/18/25 | <p>Jewish Values and Ethics <i>EJ</i>: Chapter 4: “613 Ways: Living a Jewish Life” Read: Mitzvot in Daily Life (237-246), Tikkun Olam (246)</p> |

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| 11 | BK | 3/25/25 | Jewish History <i>EJ</i> : Chapter 9: “Beyond the Rabbis: How Judaism Got Where it is Today” Read: (461-491), Appendix 2: A Timeline of Major Events (skim) |
| 12 | MR & LN Intro. Alumn | 4/1/25 | Social/Cultural Aspects of Jewish Family, Community and Conversion --Facilitated discussion. (see next page) Consider reading or starting to read: <i>Choosing Judaism or Choosing a Jewish Life</i> |
| 13 | ECF | 4/8/25 | Conclusion |
| | | Monday 4/14/25 | Attend a Passover seder! Attend an in-home or the Rodeph Shalom Second Night Seder, Monday, April 14th (please register). |

About Introduction to Judaism

Welcome! This course is designed to provide students with a foundation of the Jewish faith, culture, people and history, from a Reform perspective. Class sessions will be run with the intent of creating an atmosphere of sharing, learning and growing. You are encouraged to ask questions, express feelings, and offer input into the discussions. No question is too basic.

This is not an indoctrination class and there will be no pressure to convert to Judaism. Yet for some, it may provide the background and motivation to become Jewish. Conversion is a process that takes tremendous time and thought. This class is required as a first step toward conversion.

This class will meet on Tuesday evenings from January 14 - April 8. Each session will run from 6:00-8:00 p.m.. **On Friday, February 28, we will attend 6:00 p.m. Shabbat Services, followed by a catered dinner. Regular class sessions will focus on listed topics and will expand on assigned readings.**

Hebrew is the sacred language of the Jewish people and is found in our prayer and texts. It is the language of our holidays, symbols and traditions and it ties us to Israel and to Jews around the world. Therefore, we will devote the last 15 minutes of each session to Hebrew study.

Course requirements include the following:

- Regular attendance (no more than two absences, please notify Steven or Michael if you know you will miss time or need to call out).
- Weekly readings as noted, in preparation for each class.

Additional recommendations:

- Attendance at Shabbat services, at least monthly. You are welcome at Congregation Rodeph Shalom and other synagogues that welcome non-members. Consult with us for recommendations.
- Meetings with your sponsoring rabbi two times during the course.

Of course, in Jewish life, the study never stops. Refer to the enclosed reading list by topic for more in depth study of areas of particular interest. And feel free to ask us for further guidance in your Jewish education and involvement. We look forward to learning with you!

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Recommended Reading List

Introduction Material

To Life!, Harold Kushner
Living a Jewish Life, Anita Diamant

Torah and Tanakh

The Torah: A Modern Commentary, Gunther Plaut
The Torah: A Women's Commentary, Tamara Cohen Eshkenazi, Andrea Weiss
A Torah Commentary for Our Times, Harvey Fields
How to Read the Bible, Marc Brettler
ReVisions: Seeing Torah Through a Feminist Lens, Elyse Goldstein
The Red Tent (novel), Anita Diamant

Jewish Living

Jewish Literacy, Joseph Telushkin
Essential Judaism, George Robinson
The Guide to Jewish Living (Conservative Movement), Isaac Klein
The Doorposts of Your House, CCAR
How to Be a Jewish Parent, Anita Diamant

Jewish Holidays

The Jewish Holidays, Michael Strassfeld
Seasons of Our Joy, Arthur Waskow
The Sabbath, Abraham Joshua Heschel
A Day Apart: Shabbat at Home, Noam Zion
The Open Door: Passover Hagaddah, Sue Levi Elwell
Days of Awe, S.Y. Agnon

Jewish Lifecycle

The New Jewish Wedding, Anita Diamant
The New Jewish Baby Book, Anita Diamant
Putting God on the Guest List (bar/bat mitzvah), Jeffrey Salkin
A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort

History

A History of the Jews, Abram Sachar
The Story of Judaism, Bernard Jacob Bamberger
The Amazing Adventures of the Jewish People, Max Dimont

Holocaust

The Diary of Anne Frank, Anne Frank
Escape from Auschwitz, Primo Levi
Night, Elie Wiesel

Israel

The Zionist Idea, Arthur Hertzberg

The Making of Modern Zionism, Shlomo Avineri
My Life, Golda Meir
The Source (novel), James Michener
Exodus (novel), Leon Uris
The Hope (novel), Herman Wouk

Jewish Beliefs

The Way into Encountering God in Judaism, Neil Gillman
Quest for God, Abraham Joshua Heschel
Seek My Face, Speak My Name, Arthur Green
Standing Again at Sinai, Judith Plaskow
Engendering Judaism, Rachel Adler
Teaching Your Children About God, David Wolpe
On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader, Susannah Heschel
The Chosen (novel), Chaim Potok

Conversion

Choosing Judaism, Lydia Kukoff
Choosing a Jewish Life, Anita Diamant

Intermarriage

The Intermarriage Handbook, Judy Petsonk and Jim Remsen
Mixed Blessings, Paul and Rachel Cowan
Making a Successful Jewish Interfaith Marriage, Kerry Olitzky

Podcasts

Unorthodox
Judaism Unbound
Adventures with Dead Jews
For Heaven's Sake
Times of Israel Daily Briefing
Chutzpod
Two Freaked Out Jews
People of the Pod
Wondering Jews
OMFG Podcast

Websites

MyJewishLearning.com
TheTorah.com
ReformJudaism.org
Sefaria.org
Kveller.com
HeyAlma.com